



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Legislative Affairs

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Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

April 21, 2006

The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.  
Ranking Minority Member  
Committee on the Judiciary  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Conyers:

This is in response to your letter of March 16, 2006, expressing concerns about the upcoming elections for the City of New Orleans.

On March 27, 2006, the federal district court held a hearing in *Wallace v. Blanco* on the motion by plaintiffs represented by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund to reconsider the court's earlier finding that the State's election plan for the New Orleans election did not violate Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. The motion to reconsider raised the issues that you raised in your letter, and many of those discussed in your March 13, 2006, meeting with Civil Rights Division Assistant Attorney General Wan J. Kim. The court declined to enter the additional relief requested by the plaintiffs. The court did, however, order counsel for the parties to meet and present to the court in early April "an update on voter information/outreach initiatives, absentee balloting, polling locations and staffing of same, election day monitoring," and other matters. Since then the court has issued an order allowing a coalition of groups associated with plaintiffs special permission to monitor polling places on election day in New Orleans.

The Civil Rights Division is continuing to work vigorously on issues relating to the New Orleans elections and future elections in areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. As we indicated earlier, we arranged for federal observers for early voting sites in those parishes where their presence is authorized. Voting Section attorneys will also monitor the election.

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Please do not hesitate to contact the Department if we can be of further assistance in this or any other matter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William E. Moschella". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "W".

William E. Moschella  
Assistant Attorney General

cc: The Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner  
Chairman